

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

#02-0848

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THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE DAYSPRING

Almost daily, I am fascinated with the thought of Christ as the Bright and Morning Star [see #02-0847, August 1, 2008]. In our previous home city, each morning, before the sun came up, my wife and I would take a walk. As we left our home, we had to walk up a little hill. When we reached the top of the hill, there was a slight left turn in the road. At this point, we looked up and just above the tree line we saw the morning star, which is actually the planet Venus, shining ever so brightly, reminding us that soon the greater light, the sun, would be rising to begin the dawn of a new day. In this area, the morning star was most noticeable in the winter months, and it seemed to sparkle in a special way, especially on cold wintry days.

There were two other things of note about the morning star that we viewed from this location. First, it was always located close to the sun, either to its east or west. Second, at times there was a lesser star, yet still quite bright, located to the lower left of the morning star. When I saw this star, it reminded me of the body of Christ. Christ the Head shines brightly with His body trailing below, also shining brightly. On one particular morning as I scanned the heavens, I was really awed to see a great display of the glory of God. First, in the west to southwest quadrant of the sky, I saw the moon, the lesser light. Then, to the east of the moon, I saw the bright morning star, with its lesser star trailing below. Finally, in the eastern part of the sky, I saw the faint rays of the sun flickering on the horizon, announcing the dawn of a new day.

The symbolism of this view is mighty. The moon reflects the light of the sun, just as the ecclesia, which is the body of Christ, is to reflect Christ here on earth. The bright morning star speaks of Christ as the harbinger of a new day coming for His ecclesia, as well as for the world and all creation. The lesser star trailing below the morning star speaks of the body of Christ seated together among the celestials in Christ Jesus, as well as of Christ the Head in heaven and His body on earth. His body has the prophetic word of His coming written on their hearts, and they are His ambassadors on earth to tell the world of the coming of the new day of righteousness, justice, peace, and love. They are to be His light shining in the world. Finally, the sun speaks of the Son of God returning to this earth to take His rightful place as the King of the earth, seated on His throne of righteousness. He is the Sun of Righteousness who will arise with healing in His wings.

This leads to the oracle of the Lord given to Israel through Malachi.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.” (Malachi 4.1-2 NASB)

First, who is the true Israel of the coming kingdom of Christ? Is it not those who have been circumcised in heart, who have the laws of God put into their minds and written on their hearts (Hebrews 8.10)? Doesn't the true Israel represent the consummation of a progression of ecclesias? It has progressed from the ecclesia of the Passover that entered the wilderness, to the ecclesia of Pentecost that received an earnest of the spirit of God and has existed for the 2,000 years since Calvary, and finally to the ecclesia of the Tabernacles that will be the new creation, the dwelling of God in spirit, the spiritual, glorified, celestial body of Christ that is His complement in the oncoming

eon (age). Is it not the whole building, being fitted together, which is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, being built together into a dwelling of God *in* spirit, with Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone (see Ephesians 2.20-22)? Is it not the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God (Revelation 21.10-11)? This is the true Israel of God!

The oracle of the Lord declares that the day is coming. For those who belong to the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness will arise. Who is the Sun of Righteousness? He is the One who is the **Son** of Righteousness, the One who is the Light of the world. He will bring healing to the nations and freedom to creation that has been in slavery to corruption (see Romans 8.20-22). He will usher in His kingdom of righteousness, for **righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne** (Psalm 97.2b NASB). **He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness** (Psalm 96.13 NASB). **He is the Lord our Righteousness** (Jeremiah 23.6 NASB).

Today, the words *righteous* (adjective) and *righteousness* (noun) seem to be absent from the vocabulary of modern man. These words are so seldom used that, when I do hear them, it is sort of a surprise. However, even in these few cases, I wonder if the righteousness being spoken of is truly the righteousness of God or the self-righteousness of man. There is a big difference, for in our day of relativism in which there are few absolutes as man defines truth and everything else, for that matter, as he sees fit, man's self-righteousness is based on man's view of what is right for him and him alone. Are we not living in days in which man does whatever is right in his own eyes (Deuteronomy 21.8)? But in God's eyes, apart from Christ, none are righteous, no one does right.

Webster's dictionary defines *righteous* as "acting in a just, upright manner; doing what is right; virtuous: as, a righteous man," and "morally right or justifiable: as, a righteous act." *Righteousness* is defined as "the quality or condition of being righteous or just; rectitude or justice," and "a righteous act, quality, etc." The path of the righteous is likened to the light of dawn, which speaks mightily of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Proverbs 4.18). Righteousness and light go hand in hand.

There is only one who is righteous and who is true light. He is the Son [Sun] of God who came to this earth as the Sunrise, the Dayspring. When the Messiah was born of a virgin, the angels rejoiced, the glory of God shone, and the angel of the Lord proclaimed the good news (Luke 2.9). The heavenly host began to praise God: "**Glory to God in the highest**" (Luke 2.14). The Dayspring came to bring His divine light to guide us into the way of righteousness and peace.

Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high [the Rising [Sun] from on high] [the dayspring from on high] will visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1.78-79 NASB [ALT, KJV])

As noted above, there are three different expressions used in reference to the arrival of the Son of God: the Sunrise, the Rising Sun, and the Dayspring. The Greek word from which these expressions have been translated is *anatole*, which refers to "a rising of light, that is, dawn."

Jesus is not only the Morning Star to all of us who believe but also the dawn of the new day in our hearts. He is the rising of the light, the dawn, the dayspring. He is the Son who shines upon the hearts of those who were once in darkness. He is the Sun of Righteousness. He brings us righteousness, for **He became to us righteousness** (1 Corinthians 1.30), **so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (2 Corinthians 5.21), **not a righteousness of [our] own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith** (Philippians 3.9 NASB).

Has He arisen in your heart? Do you see Him as the Sun of Righteousness who is coming soon to usher us into His kingdom of righteousness and light? Glory to God in the highest!